

A.J. Eggenberger, Chairman
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DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

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July 8, 2008

The Honorable Thomas P. D'Agostino
Administrator
National Nuclear Security Administration
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-0701

Dear Mr. D'Agostino:

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (Board) periodically reviews the adequacy of the contractor training and qualification program at the Pantex Plant, operated by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). The Board's staff recently conducted a review of this program and found that it meets the requirements of Department of Energy Order 5480.20A, *Personnel Selection, Qualification, and Training Requirements for DOE Nuclear Facilities*. The enclosed report presents details of the staff's review and outlines areas for improvement for the program.

The reports accompanying the Board's letters of April 4, 2003, and March 27, 2006, raised issues concerning the maintenance and fidelity of the mock-up units used for nuclear weapon training. At that time, the Board's staff found that some weapon trainer units were no longer adequate for training and testing of personnel. The recent review by the Board's staff at the Pantex Plant revealed that NNSA and the contractor have invested funds and effort in upgrading a number of weapon trainer units to support current and upcoming weapon training activities. However, there is no formal preventive maintenance program for the units. There is also no formal program within NNSA to direct and coordinate funding and procurement of long-lead-time parts from other NNSA sites and the design agencies to ensure continued operation of the trainer units. Unless such formal processes are established and funded, the fidelity issues associated with these weapon trainer units that have persisted for the past 15 years will resurface.

In addition, the Board's staff notes that weapon design courses taught by the design agencies, which have been discontinued in recent years, were of significant value to the Pantex staff.

The Honorable Thomas P. D'Agostino

Page 2

Therefore, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 2286b(d), the Board requests a report within 60 days of receipt of this letter regarding the measures necessary at both the site and NNSA to address the long-term fidelity of the weapon trainer units at the Pantex Plant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. J. Eggenberger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first initial "A" being particularly large and stylized.

A. J. Eggenberger
Chairman

c: The Honorable William C. Ostendorff
The Honorable Robert L. Smolen
Mr. Steven C. Erhart
Mr. Mark B. Whitaker, Jr.
Mr. Robert J. McMorland

Enclosure